

the Endometriosis Association, an international consumer organization cofounded in 1980 by the book's principal author.

The book is composed of well-selected topics and well-organized chapters dealing with symptoms and medical and surgical treatments. There is an excellent section on learning to live with endometriosis and a brief section on new directions in investigation and therapy. Most chapters are written by nonphysicians, although a few are written by physicians who are highly regarded and knowledgeable. The text is liberally complemented by the anecdotal experiences of women with endometriosis.

The book contains a great deal of current and accurate facts. In some areas, such as surgical techniques and drug and hormonal therapy, the detail seems excessive. However, the Endometriosis Association believes that women have the right to important information that may affect their health. Defensible as this approach may be, this book illustrates that even accurate information can leave an incomplete and misleading impression when it is not put into perspective and interpreted.

A subtle bias colours the book and detracts from the sense of reassurance that the reader seeks. The patient testimonials are weighted toward the more severe and complicated manifestations of the disease. The possibilities of a more favourable long-term course and of successful therapy for many women are given little acknowledgement. What is missing from this book is a sense of balance and objectivity. Although the skies over our understanding of endometriosis are not exactly sunny, there is no point in painting the clouds darker than they really are.

For physicians, the best parts are those that deal with the psychological, emotional and social consequences of endometriosis and with coping strategies. For women with endometriosis, the book can be rec-

ommended as a comprehensive and current compilation of information. Many will find it a helpful resource. However, it is not a book for every woman seeking a balanced understanding of endometriosis and its management.

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### **Practical Decision Making in Health Care Ethics: Cases and Concepts**

Raymond J. Devettere. 487 pp. Georgetown University Press, Washington. 1995. US\$59.95, hardcover; US\$25.95, paperback. ISBN 0-87840-589-5, hardcover; ISBN 0-87840-594-1, paperback

**Overall rating:** Good

**Strengths:**

A new approach, detailed analyses of cases and well-balanced discussions of all topics, especially brain death, withholding of nutrition and euthanasia

**Weaknesses:**

US perspective, tendency to be repetitive, almost no discussion of cross-cultural issues and no discussion of resource allocation and rationing

**Audience:**

Essential reading for teachers of medical ethics and useful source for those interested in the field, but inappropriate for casual readers

**R**aymond J. Devettere has written an important new textbook on medical ethics that will be essential reading for all involved in the teaching of this subject. Rather than grounding his justifications on a principal-based approach to ethical problems, he discusses the issues from an Aristotelian concept of virtue ethics and prudential reasoning. This approach provides a better answer to the perennial question from students, "Why should I be ethical?", than most contemporary

approaches based on theories of obligation. However, the book fails to discuss issues related to different cultural beliefs.

The initial chapters are excellent, especially the one dealing with the misleading use of language. Unlike most contemporary secular writers, Devettere clearly recognizes the importance of religious traditions in shaping our current ethical thinking. Throughout the book he provides valuable historical background, especially on Christian perspectives.

Most of the common issues are covered, but resource allocation and rationing are conspicuously absent. Unfortunately, much of the discussion involves US legal issues, which are of little interest to Canadian readers. The pervasive litigiousness of the US system leads to a stronger emphasis on autonomy and patient rights than would be found in a Canadian setting. The format for each topic involves an initial discussion, a case history, the legal background, ethical analysis, prudential reasoning and ethical reflection. It is not surprising that this format produces some repetition.

The author avoids technical language, so that the book is easy to read and understand. The sections on brain death, withholding and withdrawing treatment, and euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are particularly good.

This book will appeal to those involved in teaching medical ethics and to anyone who has a serious interest in the field. It will be a useful reference source for medical students, nurses, physicians and members of hospital ethics committees. However, because of its predominantly US orientation, it cannot be recommended as a basic textbook for Canadian courses in medical ethics.

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